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Framing Of Arab Spring In US And Pakistani Press[•]

Abstract

The study framing of Arab Spring in United States and Pakistani press is focused to highlight the print media coverage of Arab Spring which took place the Middle Eastern countries directly, its surrounding territories in particular whereas rest of the world in general. Employing the content analysis method, the study analyzed the framing of the Arab Spring as a revolution; the involvement of the western forces; involvement of Islamic forces; human rights issues; refugees and displaced person; democracy and various other issues. The said issues were analyzed in three directions as supportive, against the coverage to the issues and balanced or mixed stance. The framing and coverage of the said issues in the editorials and columns of the major American newspapers named Washington Post and New York Times whereas Pakistani newspapers Dawn and The News were analyzed from January 1st 2010 to December 31st 2013. The study observed the greater interest of Pakistan and the United States as both are sharing the stakes in the countries but Pakistani newspapers have given more coverage to all the issues than the US newspapers but one common thing is that most of the coverage was in support to the Arab Spring.

Keywords: Arab Spring, Framing, Pakistani press, American press, Middle East, Revolution

Introduction

Revolution has been central to the formation of the modern world, as a historical process, revolution refers to a movement, often violent, to overthrow an old regime and effect complete change in the fundamental institutions of society. Popkin & Jeremy (1995) say that "Revolutionary crises coincide with sudden changes in the media system of the society in which they occur". [1] Media is having a greater influence over the disclosure of the events and issues in the revolutionary times and situations, in particular but also in routine life as well. In late 2010, a series of popular uprisings against repressive governments spread

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across the Arab region. The first civil demonstration, that would later become known as the Arab Spring, were organized in Tunisia on December 18th after a Tunisian fruit vendor set himself on fire to protest his harassment in the hands of police. Over The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests occurring in the Arab world and began in December 2010. These revolts were caused by dissatisfaction with the rule of local governments that had established absolute monarchies and violated human rights.

The influence of media in the 21st century has extended to the Arab Spring where it continues to play a strategic role in stimulating the political events and processes that approve their countries' political doctrines and economic interests. The big questions revolve around what should be made of this situation. It has been fashionable in some circles to glorify these inequalities by arguing that global news media is the arena in which values, such as universal human rights and democracy, are disseminated from the places that cherish them to backward politically underdeveloped regions. On the other hand, global news media has been viewed as a multi-layered structure, where the worldview of elite races, cultures and nations are imposed on others, and where questions related to the global power structure are not even allowed hearing because all issues are framed by the powerful.

“This (Arab uprisings) is the most remarkable regional uprising that I (Chomsky) can remember... where it's going to lead, nobody knows”
“Obama very carefully didn't say anything... He's doing what U.S. leaders regularly do. As I (Chomsky) said, there is a playbook: whenever a favored dictator is in trouble, try to sustain him, hold on; if at some point it becomes impossible, switch sides” (Chomsky, 2011). [3]

According to Bradley (2009) a revolution was about to be observed in the region particularly in Egypt, the circumstances at that time were leading towards such a result which was observed in the form of revolution in Egypt. This was revealed in a book *Inside Egypt* by Bradely which was banned by the government in Egypt. The issues from corruption to the grass root level issues like poverty. Corruption was a major issue associated with the Egyptian president who was considered as most corrupt offender of all times. [4]

The newspapers from Pakistan and United States are selected for analysis regarding the issues related to the Arab Spring including the American dailies including *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* which are well reputed and largely circulated newspapers not only in United States but also internationally are selected for the study on one hand whereas on the other hand the Pakistani dailies having good reputation including *The News International* and *Dawn* are selected which are widely circulated and well reputed among political and bureaucratic circles in Pakistan.

The major focus of the study is to examine the editorial policies and opinions of the selected newspapers from the two countries related to the issues of Arab Spring as the issue is of greater importance for Pakistan being an important Muslim state whereas for United States being an important international power. According to Van Dijk (1996) the editorials are considered important as textual

examination of the predominant ideological societal assumptions. Editorials are important as they present summary of the news events and the organizational point of view of the newspapers as well forming expectations, presenting recommendations, advices and alerts and warnings (Van Dijk, 1996).[6]

Meltzer (2006) also acknowledges the importance of the editorial board of the newspapers which in his point of view helps to maintain the publisher autonomy and its influence over the reporting of the events. [7] The study in hand would help to understand the editorial policies of the selected Pakistani and American newspapers regarding the Arab Spring.

Objectives Of The Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To analyze the exposition of the Arab Spring in opinions of American newspapers.
- To analyze the exposition of the Arab Spring in opinions of Pakistani newspapers.

Hypotheses

H1: Pakistani newspapers have given more coverage to the Arab Spring whereas American newspapers have given less coverage.

H2: Overall positive/supportive stance towards the Arab Spring is given by the press of both Pakistan and America.

Litreature Review

There have been a number of studies examining the editorials and columns of the newspapers over the issues of greater importance; as opinions of the journalists are influenced by the ideological standings of the individuals in their personal capacity (Van Dijk, 1996).The coverage of the US media is having importance as it is read, analyzed and discussed globally. The American news and the media coverage of the international issues has greater role in the decision making and foreign policies of the states related to the international issues of importance. The American media is having a significant role to influence the foreign policy for the issues of international importance. The American mass media is considered important in various manners such as creating awareness among the public, the shaping of public opinion and to influence the government decision making for the issues of international importance(Shoemaker and Reese, 1996;Graber, 1980;Cohen, 1963).[9]

Wilfred (1993) opines that the third world countries mostly criticize the west and US media for not giving them enough coverage, moreover the coverage that is given is mostly based on wars, conflicts and crisis related to such states. The third world states are conscious and are concerned about their portrayal in the international media. This also plays a negative role in the economic growth, strengthening social structure and their national pride. Such news, reports and coverages let the states suffer particularly by various means.[10]

Dorman & Farhang(1987) present that the US media coverage has not been the same all the time as it depends on the policies of the government in other words the US media supports the official or governmental point of view as the coverage of the US media about Iran remained in favour of Iran before revolution in Iran but after revolution in Iran the news coverage took an opposite anti Iran tilt.[11]

According to Salaita (2012) politics of the Arab World connotes not as “the Arab Spring” or as an “uprising” more accurately it shows the general spirit of the popular protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, and the countries. Never before has the media played such a central role in the political unrest and the movement for political change. While state-owned media’s role grew more and more difficult, across the region protestors used social media., blogs and mobile phone footage to get their message out. In February, 2011, Thomas Friedman declared, “For anyone who spent time in Tahrir Square these last three weeks, one thing was very obvious: Israel was not the part of this story at all. The U.S media cover the Syria violence and promote it all over the world, U.S media try to dominate over all media and follow imperialism”. If we talk about the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the U.S media portrayed the positive image Saudi Arabia because of his interest and alliance, U.S media does not highlight the Saudi violence in Bahrain.

Theoretical Framework

Keeping in mind the literature reviewed for this study and theories like Agenda setting and Framing concept that provide the foundation stone to conduct the study. The objectives of applying these theories to analyze the importance of media and presentation of issues in electronic and print media. This theoretical concept helps us to understand that how media highlight the certain issues in press.

Methodology

This study deals with the textual analysis of the text or content given in the editorial pages of the selected newspapers. For the study in hand the Content Analysis technique of mass communication is employed. Content analysis is considered as a method of social research which is used to analyze the content of the media in the form of text including video or audio contents or written text Sarantakos (1998). Content analysis is widely used and accepted method in mass communication and media Wimmer, et al (1991).

Further, the unit of analysis which is considered as major thing in content analysis technique includes each and every word, sentence, even entire editorial or column and their themes related to the Arab Spring.

Categories

- A Revolution
- B Involvement of Western forces
- C Involvement of Islamic forces
- D Use of weapons
- E Human Rights issues

Framing Of Arab Spring In Us And Pakistani Press

- F** Refugees/Displaced citizens
- G** Democracy
- H** Others

The said categories are analyzed in three directions including supportive, non-supportive and neutral.

Response

Newspaper	Revolution	Involvement of western forces	Involvement of Islamic forces	Use of weapons	Human rights issues	Refugees/displaced citizens	Democracy	Protests/demonstration	Others	Year	Opinion
Daily Dawn	105	83	84	69	83	68	92	69	84	173	173
The News	91	102	77	73	43	50	75	60	87	139	139
New York Times	105	104	75	60	77	71	91	65	66	158	158
Washington Post	97	89	70	70	81	75	88	80	66	169	169

Table 1

Table 1 indicates that Daily Dawn contains total 105 statements on revolution, 83 statements on involvement of western forces, 84 statements on involvement of Islamic forces, 69 on use of weapons, 83 on human rights, 68 on refugees, 92 on democracy, 69 on protests whereas 84 on others. Total statements in Daily Dawn in the selected years and opinions is 173. On the other hand, The News contains total 91 statements on revolution, 102 statements on involvement of western forces, 77 statements on involvement of Islamic forces, 73 on use of weapons, 43 on human rights, 50 on refugees, 75 on democracy, 60 on protests whereas 87 on others. Total statements in The News in the selected years and opinions is 139. New York Times contains total 105 statements on revolution, 104 statements on involvement of western forces, 75 statements on involvement of Islamic forces, 60 on use of weapons, 77 on human rights, 71 on refugees, 91 on democracy, 65 on

protests whereas 66 on others. Total statements in New York Times in the selected years and opinions is 158. Total statements in Washington Post in the selected years and opinions is 169.

Newspaper

		Frequency Percent			
Daily Dawn	Supportive	73	42.2	69.5	69.5
	Non-Supportive	18	10.4	17.1	86.7
	Balanced	14	8.1	13.3	100.0
	Total	105	60.7	100.0	
The News	Supportive	57	41.0	62.6	62.6
	Non-Supportive	12	8.6	13.2	75.8
	Balanced	22	15.8	24.2	100.0
	Total	91	65.5	100.0	
New York Times	Supportive	75	47.5	71.4	71.4
	Non-Supportive	25	15.8	23.8	95.2
	Balanced	5	3.2	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	66.5	100.0	
Washington Post	Supportive	61	36.1	62.9	62.9
	Non-Supportive	32	18.9	33.0	95.9
	Balanced	4	2.4	4.1	100.0
	Total	97	57.4	100.0	

Table 2

Table 2 reveals that (42.2%) statements on revolution in Daily Dawn are supportive, (10.4%) statements are non-supportive whereas (8.1%) statements are balanced. Total no. of statements on revolution in Daily Dawn is 105. On the other hand, (41.0%) statements on revolution in The News are supportive, (8.6%) statements are non-supportive whereas (15.8%) statements are balanced. Total statements on revolution in The News is 91. (47.5%) statements on revolution in New York Times are supportive, (15.8%) statements are non-supportive whereas (3.2%) statements are balanced. Total no. of statements on revolution in New York Times is 105. On the other hand, (36.1%) statements on revolution in Washington Post are supportive, (18.9%) statements are non-supportive whereas (2.4%) statements are balanced. Total statements on revolution in Washington Post is 97.

Discussion And Conclusion

The study framing of Arab Spring in United States and Pakistani press is focused to highlight the print media coverage to one of the most important event named as the Arab Spring which took the Middle Eastern countries directly, its surrounding

territories in particular whereas rest of the world in general. The study analyzed the coverage of the Arab Spring as a revolution; the involvement of the western forces; involvement of Islamic forces; human rights issues; refugees and displaced person; democracy and various other. The said issues were analyzed in three directions as supportive to the issues, against the coverage to the issues and a balanced or mixed stance. The content analysis technique of Mass Communication was used to check the framing of the desired issues in selected mediums, moreover media agenda was also focus of the study which lead the study towards the framing theory. The framing and coverage of the said issues in the editorials and columns of the major American newspapers named Washington Post and New York Times whereas Pakistani newspapers daily Dawn and the News were analyzed from January 1st 2010 to December 31st 2013. Key objectives of the study were to find out the exposition of Arab Spring in American newspaper opinions (table 1); to find out the exposition of Arab Spring in Pakistani newspaper opinions (table 1). The hypothesis of the study was H1 Pakistani newspapers have given more coverage to the Arab Spring whereas American newspapers have given less coverage, hypothesis is approved (Table 1 & Table 3). H2 discusses that overall positive/supportive stance towards the Arab Spring is given by newspapers from both Pakistan and the United States (Table 2 & Table 3). The study observed the greater interest of Pakistan and the United States as both are sharing the stakes in the countries where the unrest is based. Due to the time and resources limitations the opinion pages were discussed but in future the overall news stories stance is also required to be discussed regarding the Arab Spring. Furthermore, along with media agenda, the public and policy agendas may also be made part of the research engaging the public through surveys and interviews and policy makers through interviews and panel discussions.

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